

from WinZip Computing, Inc. of Mansfield, Connecticut, to perform the following steps dynamically as a user navigates the Web site:

1. Create a *.zip file, for example through a command line provided command or automatically through an API function call.
2. Include in the *.zip file a previously compiled installation and configuration script in executable form, for example an Autolt™ script. Automation programs such as Autolt provides for automated software installations and other tasks through the use of scripts. The script file can be used to perform window commands (waiting for, hiding, activating, and so on) in addition to transmitting keystroke messages to specific windows. Notably, any automation method capable of performing automated tasks can suffice for accomplishing the installation and configuration of the e-mail stationery.
3. Include in the *.zip file specific graphics for the user based upon the uploaded and converted artwork initially supplied by the user.
4. Convert the *.zip file to a self-extracting executable (preferably via command line although API calls are available for automated functionality).
5. Configure the self-extracting executable to execute the script by selecting an "execute after" option.

When the self-extracting *.exe file opens, all files can be decompressed or "unzipped" to a specified directory for the e-mail client in which the e-mail stationery can be accessed. Subsequently, in accordance with the execute after option, the script can execute in consequence of which the e-mail stationery can be installed and the e-mail client can be configured to use the e-mail stationery when creating e-mails. In the preferred embodiment, the WinZip compression tool and the Autolt scripting tool can be used to implement the above-described procedure. Nevertheless, it should be readily understood by one skilled in the art that the selection of the WinZip and Autolt tools are

not limitations of the instant invention. Other compression, scripting or, alternatively, installation and packaging programs can be used in lieu of the preferred compression and scripting tools. In fact, if necessary, the e-mail stationery and the installation script can be downloaded automatically or manually on an individual basis.

5 In yet a further aspect of the invention, the subscriber can download and extract the executable file from the Web server. The package can contain folder information that will be compatible with the setup of most registrant/licensees' computers. However the subscriber can have the option to override these settings and install and execute the package anywhere on the subscriber's hard-drive. With regard to the self-extracting files, the files are automatically extracted when the program is executed. In a further aspect of the invention, the registrant/licensee can execute and install the files. This is illustrated in step 19. The install can be performed by emulating keystrokes, such as by using the Autolt scripting tool. Autolt scripts are designed to allow configuration of software applications where settings are not easily changed via the registry or by other means. The tool provides a convert-to-EXE option that allows a user to compile previously created scripts.

10 In one embodiment of the invention, two Autolt scripts are created and executed. The first script is designed for Outlook, the second for Outlook Express. Other similar scripts can be created for other e-mail clients, for example Eudora. The scripts can manually configure the specific e-mail client for HTML email and stationery setup if the client supports stationery. The manual configuration can be performed by emulating keystrokes. In the Outlook implementation, files are extracted to a default common file

area that is used to setup stationery. Alternatively, a desktop application can perform the necessary registry changes and file copying that is required, instead of emulating keystrokes.

In a further embodiment of the invention, the subscriber can forward references to the artwork distribution system to other network-connected users. In particular, the user can be prompted to provide e-mail addresses for the intended recipients. For recipients within the same organization who would normally prefer to use the same stationery, a priority code can be issued that allows access to the same artwork supplied by the current registrant/licensee. For recipients in different organizations who would normally prefer to use different stationery, no priority codes are necessary.

In a further aspect of the invention, all e-mails created by a registered user which incorporate the artwork also, by virtue of the present invention, will transfer a marketing reference to the artwork distribution system to recipients of the e-mail. Hence, e-mail incorporating artwork distributed in the present invention will be discernable by anyone to whom an e-mail is sent. In consequence, recipients of the e-mail are encouraged to register for branded email produced by the present invention. In a further embodiment of the invention, registrants/licensees can log into the Web site at any time. If the user wishes to update any information or re-generate their branded email header, they can, at any time, return to the Web site. After logging in, all information can be updated and new artwork can be uploaded.

In yet another embodiment of the invention, instead of inserting logos or other artwork into electronic mail, similar processes could be used by someone skilled in the

art, to reformat and insert other electronic templates for a variety of other uses within software programs. For example, word processing programs, fax programs, and/or accounting programs.

In a further aspect of the invention, multiple images can be stored and the client can select images from the stored list. For example, the subscriber can have the option of selecting from a plurality of images for each outgoing message. In a further aspect of the invention, similar image manipulation processes automatically format and insert other multi-media file types, for example, moving GIF, JPEG, MP3, QuickTime, MOV, WAV, VRML, 3d Web Interact, and Streaming Video. Furthermore, additional HTML or DHTML areas can be inserted into the e-mail or other electronic messaging systems that would contain additional functionality. This can include, combining multiple images with specific and different functionality into one image block within a user's e-mail message. The functionality can include, but is not limited to, coordinate-based connections to various other URLs, electronic and virtual signatures, encryption keys, virtual business cards, live cameras, voice recordings, and animations.

In an alternate embodiment of the invention, additional and completely separate HTML or DHTML areas can be inserted into the body of a client's electronic message. One functionality can include providing navigation and control mechanisms and functionality that is drawn from the client's web site through parsing and/or self-selection or a combination of the two. This can result in a personalized interaction tool, launch pad or task bot both connecting the client's website with the user and allowing

electronic mail based transactions and transaction tracking. This can take the appearance of a toolbar or navigation bar.

In an alternate embodiment, additional HTML or DHTML area functionality can link to other services, for example a blind user survey that can be compiled
5 anonymously by the host website, for the client's use. Alternately the additional HTML or DHTML areas could provide a mechanism for on-line, click-through contests or other promotional marketing. Alternatively, the additional HTML or DHTML areas can provide for intra-company and inter-company calendaring, messaging and collaborating. Moreover, the additional HTML and DHTML areas can provide a vehicle for on-line
10 click-to-dial (links to automatic dialing) for telephony or other electronic connections.

In one aspect of the invention, in operation, a message client 20, such as a subscriber, can compose and send one or more electronic messages to a designated recipient 28 disposed about the Internet. While a typical message client would be configured to forward the composed messages to a mail server 26 which has been specially configured merely to forward electronic messages to designated recipient mail
15 servers, in the present invention the message client 20 has been pre-configured instead to forward messages 22 to the logo server 25. Logo server 25 can include letterhead which has been generated according to the process illustrated in FIG. 1.

Upon receipt of the message 22, the logo server 25 can combine the message
20 22 with stored letterhead 24 to form a composite message 27. Subsequently, the logo server 25 can cross-reference the message client 20 with a pre-specified mail server 26. Once the mail server 26 has been identified, the logo server 25 can forward the

composite message 27 to the mail server 26. The mail server 26, in turn, can forward the composite message to the designated recipient 28.

In accordance with the invention, an exemplary logo server is illustrated in FIG.

3. The server can include a host 301 and a client 315. Host 301 can include a vector
5 image processor 303 which can be an application such as Photoshop 5.5, running on the server. Additionally, an archiving/extracting utility application, such as Winzip Packager 310, can also reside on the host. The host 301 can include Web server 304 in communication with a database server 307. Database server 307 provides open database connectivity to Web server 304. Web server 304 can act as a local store for
10 Web pages 302 which include both markup 306 and images 305. Within the Web server 304, a transaction server, for example Microsoft Transaction Server® (MTS) 308 can host COM components 309 which are responsible for form management, raster image processing 311, database utilities, image processing automating (Photoshop/Image Glue) and functionality packaging. The client 315, by comparison,
15 can include a Web browser 312 such as Netscape Communicator® or Internet Explorer®. A message client 313 can reside on the client 302 as can one or more desktop applications 314. The host 301 can communicate with the client computer 315 via HTTP connection 316.

The present invention can be realized in hardware, software, or a combination of
20 hardware and software. A method and apparatus for transmitting an electronic message on electronic letterhead which has been configured in accordance with the present invention can be realized in a centralized fashion in one computer system, or in

a distributed fashion where different elements are spread across several interconnected computer systems. Any kind of computer system, or other apparatus adapted for carrying out the methods described herein, is suited.

5 A typical combination of hardware and software could be a general purpose computer system with a computer program that, when being loaded and executed, controls the computer system such that it carries out the methods described herein. The present invention can also be embedded in a computer program product, which comprises all the features enabling the implementation of the methods described herein, and which, when loaded in a computer system is able to carry out these methods.

10 Computer program or application in the present context means any expression, in any language, code or notation, of a set of instructions intended to cause a system having an information processing capability to perform a particular function either directly or after either or both of the following a) conversion to another language, code or notation; b) reproduction in a different material form. Significantly, this invention can be embodied in other specific forms without departing from the spirit or essential attributes thereof, and accordingly, reference should be had to the following claims, rather than to the foregoing specification, as indicating the scope of the invention.

CLAIMS

I claim:

1. A method of transmitting an electronic message on electronic letterhead comprising the steps of:
 - generating electronic letterhead from computer-generated artwork;
 - receiving a request to transmit an electronic message from a subscriber to a recipient, said subscriber and recipient each having an associated network addressable electronic message client;
 - combining said electronic letterhead and said electronic message to form a composite electronic message; and,
 - forwarding said composite electronic message to said recipient.
2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
 - configuring said subscriber's network addressable electronic message client to transmit electronic messages to an application server;
 - receiving in said application server said electronic message from said subscriber's associated network addressable electronic message client; and,
 - performing said combining and forwarding steps in said application server.
3. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:
 - receiving said computer-generated artwork from said subscriber.

1 4. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:
2 configuring said subscriber's network addressable electronic message client to
3 perform said combining and forwarding steps.

1 5. The method of claim 4, wherein said configuring step comprises the steps of:
2 installing a plug-in to said subscriber's network addressable electronic message
3 client, said plug in performing said combining and forwarding steps.

1 6. The method of claim 4, wherein said configuring step comprises the step of:
2 substituting default stationery in said subscriber's network addressable electronic
3 message client with said electronic letterhead.

1 7. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:
2 associating a hyperlink with said electronic letterhead, said hyperlink comprising
3 a network address at which marketing information can be accessed by activating said
4 hyperlink.

1 8. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
2 providing access over a computer communications network to said electronic
3 letterhead;
4 accepting user-modifications to said electronic letterhead; and,

5 substituting said user-modified electronic letterhead for said generated electronic
6 letterhead.

1 9. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:
2 registering said subscriber, said registration comprising collecting demographic
3 data for said subscriber.

1 10. A system for transmitting an electronic message on electronic letterhead
2 comprising:
3 electronic letterhead stored in a database, said electronic letterhead comprising
4 computer-generated artwork;
5 a composite message processor for combining received electronic messages
6 with said electronic letterhead;
7 a configuration applet for configuring an electronic message client to redirect
8 transmitted electronic messages to said composite message processor;
9 an message forwarding server configured to forward said composite messages
10 to an electronic message server.

1 11. A machine readable storage having stored thereon a computer program for
2 transmitting an electronic message on electronic letterhead, said computer program
3 comprising a routine set of instructions for causing the machine to perform the steps of:
4 generating electronic letterhead from computer-generated artwork;

5 receiving a request to transmit an electronic message from a subscriber to a
6 recipient, said subscriber and recipient each having an associated network addressable
7 electronic message client;

8 combining said electronic letterhead and said electronic message to form a
9 composite electronic message; and,

10 forwarding said composite electronic message to said recipient.

1 12. The machine readable storage of claim 11, further comprising the steps of:
2 configuring said subscriber's network addressable electronic message client to
3 transmit electronic messages to an application server;

4 receiving in said application server said electronic message from said
5 subscriber's associated network addressable electronic message client; and,
6 performing said combining and forwarding steps in said application server.

1 13. The machine readable storage of claim 11, further comprising the step of:
2 receiving said computer-generated artwork from said subscriber.

1 14. The machine readable storage of claim 11, further comprising the step of:
2 configuring said subscriber's network addressable electronic message client to
3 perform said combining and forwarding steps.

1 15. The machine readable storage of claim 14, wherein said configuring step
2 comprises the steps of:

3 installing a plug-in to said subscriber's network addressable electronic message
4 client, said plug in performing said combining and forwarding steps.

1 16. The machine readable storage of claim 14, wherein said configuring step
2 comprises the step of:

3 substituting default stationery in said subscriber's network addressable electronic
4 message client with said electronic letterhead.

1 17. The machine readable storage of claim 11, further comprising the step of:

2 associating a hyperlink with said electronic letterhead, said hyperlink comprising
3 a network address at which marketing information can be accessed by activating said
4 hyperlink.

1 18. The machine readable storage of claim 11, further comprising the steps of:

2 providing access over a computer communications network to said electronic
3 letterhead;

4 accepting user-modifications to said electronic letterhead; and,

5 substituting said user-modified electronic letterhead for said generated electronic
6 letterhead.

- 1 19. The machine readable storage of claim 11, further comprising the step of:
2 registering said subscriber, said registration comprising collecting demographic
3 data for said subscriber.

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